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Graham, George M.

Sending the highway to school

New York

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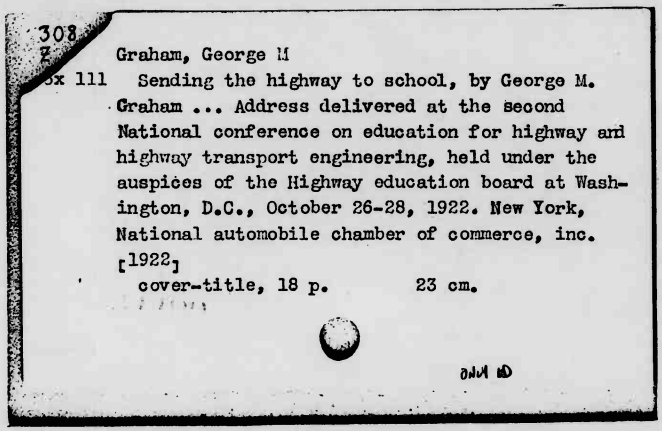

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Through the President's Office

Sending the Highway to School

by

GEORGE M. GRAHAM

Vice-President, Chandler Motor Car Company, and Member, Highways Committee, National Automobile Chamber of Commerce.

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Address delivered at the Second National Conference on Education for Highway and Highway Transport Engineering, held under the auspices of the Highway Education Board at Washington, D. C., October 26-28, 1922

NATIONAL AUTOMOBILE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INC.

366 Madison Avenue, New York City

Sending the Highway to School

by

GEORGE M. GRAHAM

SIGNIFICANT POINTS IN THE ADDRESS

The solution of every problem depends on education.

The history of modern transportation has been made within the last 120 years.

The greatest boon of transportation is in the lowering of the costs of necessities and enjoyments of life so that happiness may be widespread.

Highway transportation need not conflict with other kinds of distribution.

In forwarding highway development the educator gives new force to an ancient alliance.

Mr. Chairman and Fellow Highwaymen:—

Perhaps to some people the designation "highwaymen" once seemed appropriate, at least in as far as it related to a portion of us.

The taxpayer assessed for his share of a mile of concrete road, or the motorist settling his automobile repair bill, may often have felt that highways transport and "hold-up" went together.

Happily, better methods and a better understanding are changing this condition.

We have this great advantage over Robin Hood, Jack Cade and Jesse James, that robbery is not essential to our program.

The knights of the road used to pretend that they robbed the rich to help the poor, quite overlooking the incidental benefit to themselves.

In our work without discriminating against anyone we can benefit all.

This conference now in session achieves a great forward step.

The application of the ordered processes of education to highway transport problems is of infinite importance. It means almost incredibly expanded possibilities.

Nothing Education Cannot Conquer

The solution of every problem depends on education.

In fact, it comes as near omnipotence as can anything human.

Nothing is beyond the compass of education. It deals in miracles. It can make of the ignorant immigrant a successful business man in two years, it can develop into contact with the world the blind, deaf mute, Helen Keller, it can even work successfully with the tiny modicum of brain found in the skull of the chicken.

I do not mean the chicken who rides in the car. I mean the one which used to get under the wheels.

I have noticed that even the chicken gets wiser as time goes on.

Every traveled automobile road used to be a slaughter house for foolish fowl.

It is true it was always the hen that got killed.

The rooster, with superior masculine mentality, used to stand sensibly on the side till the car passed.

It was the hen which made hysterical flights back and forth until finally the heavy wheels sent feathers flying and finished the tragedy.

But you who ride will agree with me that the hen is learning caution.

In some mysterious way the word has been passed down from one generation to another that automobiles are a great thing to avoid. So the mortality constantly decreases.

If, into the puny head of a chicken, it be possible thus to force knowledge, how infinite are the possibilities in other directions?

The subject of how our educational institutions may aid the course of highway transport is so big that I have need to be careful lest this presentation be encumbered with excessive detail. I shall try to concentrate on those factors which are regarded by our industry as fundamental.

You have a right to be answered on certain elemental questions before we can reasonably expect to enlist your co-operation.

Is there a future for highway transport?

Will it offer an honorable, useful and remunerative calling to those who adopt it?

Are we in time, or has the subject been already over-exploited?

All Depend on Transportation

It seems to me that the right answer can be made in a few words.

None will deny that food, fuel, raw material, finished product and facile passenger communication are highly necessary, and that whatever brings them to the people at lowest cost constitutes public service.

If this be conceded the case of highway transport is established.

I doubt not that there will be ample rewards for trained men who can develop the highways so that they may take their proper share of distribution.

Far from being over-exploited, highways transport is still an infant industry. In fact, all transportation is a young science.

Go to the authorities and try to study the history of transportation, and you will be amazed to find that until the last one hundred and twenty years there is no advance.

The Romans, and later the French, under Napoleon, built some good roads, and that represents the sum total of progress until the first decade of the nineteenth century.

It is hard to realize that anything so vital to human kind as transportation should have been so slow in its development.

The man of Nazareth, founder of the faith, and George Washington, founder of his country, living 1800 years apart, knew only the same mediums of transportation.

On land they could be hauled by man or beast. On the water they were dependent upon the straining muscles of the oarsman or the vagaries of the wind.

It is an amazing thought when set against all that happened in the world in that time.

The culture of Greece, the far-flung power of Rome, the mighty empire of Charlemagne all had their rise, their history and their fall.

The Dark Ages and the Middle Ages came and went. The Crusades wrote their dramatic history.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries came that great outburst of exploration that carried the mariners of Europe all over the world to the discovery of new countries.

Three great revolutions, in England in 1688, in our country in 1776, and in France in 1793, made their contributions to free institutions.

Yet during all that long period, transportation stood still.

In other directions, marvelous advances were made.

Progress in Other Directions

Inventors achieved both for good and ill.

They discovered gunpowder. They invented printing.

The great art works of all times, paintings, statues, buildings, mountain peaks of human genius, all came to the world while transportation remained primitive.

Actually the history of modern transportation can be written within the last 120 years.

Fulton with the first steamboat in 1806, Stephenson with the first

locomotive some score of years later, the electric trolley in the final quarter of the last century, and finally the internal combustion motor vehicle on land and water, and in the air, represent more progress than had previously been made in all recorded history.

While much has been accomplished, much remains to be done.

Education is urgently needed to give highways transport an efficiency that previously it has lacked.

Up to date we have, to a large extent, simply blundered along.

I doubt not that there have been made automobiles that did not fit the highways, and highways that did not fit the automobile. There have been iniquities of taxation. There have been faulty choices of routes. There have been many economic mistakes, based mainly on the fact that the science is so young and the elements so huge.

I believe that education is ready for this immense task, because its great modern keynote is practicality.

This was not always so.

In days gone by, and particularly in the older countries, it was the function of college training to make what were smugly called "gentlemen."

The student of then bothered little about the accumulation of education.

Diversion was more important. He sought a roystering four years, with some such occasional prank as smashing windows, burning a barn or dropping a policeman down a sewer.

But the intensity of modern competition has changed all this.

The student cannot afford to waste his time, and the colleges, therefore, may live up to their high ideals of service to the public, demonstrated in turning out yearly useful and efficient specialists.

Perhaps the greatest boon of transportation is not a technical one. It does not have to do with subgrades or road surfaces, with automobile horsepower or with taxation schedules.

It concerns rather the lowering of the costs of the necessities and enjoyments of life so that happiness may be widespread.

This has an importance that carries it into the realm of economics and statesmanship.

It is the reply to the malcontent or Bolshevist who raises his voice against our institutions.

We Accept Changes Quickly

Changes come so swiftly in our country, and we are so facile in conforming to them, that we fail to comprehend what the combination of the engineer, educator and business man is doing for home contentment.

To prove my point in a homely way, I should like to contrast the daily life of the average citizen today and twenty years ago.

Then there was little for father but work. The family hardly knew him.

His transit to and from his place of business was made in the darkness of morning or the dusk of evening.

Dinner, a wearied glance at the evening paper, and bedtime, formed his nightly program.

The cost of taking the whole family to the theatre was prohibitive, for amusements had not yet been popularized.

Saturday afternoon he spent alone at the baseball game, economy once more eliminating the family.

On Saturday night, in the pre-Volstead period, free lunch and the companionship of the saloon pulled him from home.

Sunday morning he slept late. His newspaper filled the afternoon, and the evening was spent at the cigar store. The only time he saw the whole family was at the Sunday dinner.

That was twenty years ago. Now mark the amazing change.

The American wife should rank the automobile and the moving picture with the eighteenth and nineteenth amendments, for they have restored her husband to her. In fact, along with other things modern, they have opened a new family life.

Father, even the father of moderate circumstances, can sleep later now. His automobile materially cuts his time to the office or shop. Also it gets him home earlier.

What a vista progress has opened for the evenings!

Each night makes its own appeal.

On Monday night the whole family can go to a high class moving picture at small cost.

On Tuesday they gather round the radio. Wednesday they can hear all the master works of music in a victrola concert.

On Thursday father and mother go to the club dance, for the modern jazz has made stepping so easy for the head of the family that he imagines himself another Donald Brian.

On Friday perhaps it may be the school basketball contest, or some of the many other healthful athletic activities, intelligently controlled, that are doing so much to improve the physical equipment of the American boy.

On Saturday afternoon there is a chance to play golf at the inexpensive club, or even on the public links.

All Out for the Big Picnic

But Sunday is the big day.

The whole family gets action. No staying in bed then.

Everybody goes to the big picnic.

Into the Ford are crowded father, mother, five children, grandmother, the dog, rugs, newspapers, fishing poles and even occasionally a bird cage.

Nothing could be finer than this day of family outing.

It brings the children into the healthful open.

It is family companionship, during the only period of life when this is possible, before the children have grown old enough to leave the home hearth.

Of course all development carries its problem.

I would not contend, for example, that the moving picture is an undivided gain.

Something could be done for its morals, and much, despite many undoubted educational phases, for its intelligence.

For another thing it is the foe of home cooking.

No matter how many graduates the cooking school may turn out, the moving pictures will get them if they don't look out.

Mother used to be content to spend all afternoon preparing dinner. She knows better now.

By grabbing a slice of ham at 5.45 she can throw dinner together in fifteen minutes and be free to spend any afternoon at the movies.

Not that I would seem to criticize the gentler sex.

This would call for a courage far more overwhelming than mine.

Nor has man always done such a good job as to warrant him in criticism.

It was to a woman that man gave the job of making the first American flag, and yet he made her wait a century and a half to vote for it.

Is Vital to All Sections

In directing his attention to highways transport, the educator does not limit his scope. He has a subject which is just as vital to the cities as to the rural section.

First consider the farmer. Here is what the combination of motor car and good roads means to him:

It gives access to the nearby town and thus ends his isolation.

It brings the school nearer to his children.

It shortens the distance from the doctor's office.

It is the connecting link between his farm and his market.

It carries his newspaper and magazines.

It delivers supplies of all kinds to his kitchen door.

It gives him more time to work on the farm.

It enables him to buy land for its productiveness and low cost uninfluenced by contiguity to railroads.

He can move his produce when prices are right, and develop not only a broader market but a more stabilized one.

Equally decisive is the advantage to the city worker of moderate means.

His car permits himself and his family to escape urban squalor and congestion for the health and beauty of the suburbs.

It is available to himself and his family for a hundred valuable services.

The interest of the millions, the truest basis of economic law, demands better highways transportation.

The wealthy tourist and the truck using corporation form but an infinitesimal portion of those who will gain.

The benefit will spread itself principally to two great classes as follows:

First: To three and one-half million farmers dependent upon their automobiles.

Second: To as many more city dwelling families with incomes of less than $4,000 per year, who with the farmers, own two-thirds of all the automobiles sold.

The motor vehicle actually gives this country some 11,000,000 transportation monopolies, all, whether truck or passenger car, subject to schedules and routes made by the owner. This means individual transportation.

I have spoken of "individual transportation." I should like to analyze that term, and undertake to show you gentlemen a most interesting reversion of method.

Generally speaking, our modern development has been from individualism to centralization.

Our country began as an association of individual states, but their boundary lines constantly become less important and the Federal idea more dominant.

Tendency Toward Centralization

The experience of the workman and manufacturing processes affords another example.

Formerly the workman's productiveness depended upon his possession of the tools of his craft. The carpenter with his saw, the shoemaker with his awl, the blacksmith with his hammer, the printer

with his stick, each carried his trade with him wherever he went. That was individualism.

Then came a great modern development.

Huge machines supplanted the tool. They enormously increased production.

You furnish another example. You illustrate the tendency of centralization in your own home every day.

You don't go down to the pump or to the well for water. You don't light the kerosene lamp. In many cases you don't even produce your own heat.

All these come from central power plants.

For centuries individualism dominated transportation.

The horse and wagon, the man and boat, are instances.

Then great steamships, steam railways and electric trolleys took transportation from the individual.

This was combination, it improved service, and these great mediums will always be with us in a place of commanding importance.

But transportation has lately presented the paradox of a return to individual facilities.

In both freight haulage and passenger transportation, the motor vehicle has turned back the hands on the clock of time, and we now supplement centralized transportation with an individual medium, subject entirely to your own whim, preference or need.

Essentially highways transportation need not conflict with other kinds of distribution.

It cannot haul the two and one-half billion tons of freight carried by the railroads in a normal year, nor transport such part of their billion passengers as ride long distances.

It cannot give service in congested municipal areas to the sixteen billion yearly electric trolley passengers.

But it can serve the public over two and three-quarter million miles of highways, the greater portion of them not cared for by any other transportation element.

I have discussed general considerations, have analyzed the present status of highways transport, and have briefly indicated some of its possibilities.

Six Courses

I should like now to be more concrete and to make recommendations concerning the subjects to which educators should give thought in arranging their courses.

The subject is so big that it involves almost a whole new system of education. I genuinely believe that the various branches of high-

way transport cover a wide enough range to furnish the exclusive subjects of training for a very considerable college.

Without attempting to subdivide the work or to deal with its minor phases, there seem to me six main types of men you must produce. There are highly remunerative opportunities for all.

The following is the list:

First—Road builders.
Second—Motor car producers.
Third—Highway financiers.
Fourth—Highway lawmakers.
Fifth—Transportation analysts.
Sixth—Real estate experts.

Perhaps the biggest task of all falls to the road builder.

In this class I naturally include the highway commissioner, the highway engineer, purveyors of materials and the contractors who actually do the work.

To this group is allotted the major responsibility of building roads of sufficient carrying capacity to take whatever traffic be demanded by the nation's economic needs.

These roads must not only join present populous points but must open new territory.

Along with the roads there must be provided adequate maintenance at not excessive cost.

It has been pointed out by the field marshal of good roads, Chief McDonald, that our greatest problem is to see that our highways keep pace with increasing highways rolling stock.

There has been three times as much investment in rolling stock between 1910 and 1921 as has been expended in the same period for highways construction.

It is an enormous responsibility to plan an adequate highway system for a country covering three million square miles.

Six hundred million dollars were expended last year by Federal, State, County and Township divisions upon highway construction and maintenance.

In the program is involved the biggest expenditure ever assumed by this country except for war projects. Its total dwarfs the cost of the Panama Canal.

There are questions of proper routes, studies of subgrade and proper surfacing.

The men who will assume this responsibility cannot be too efficient, cannot be too highly trained.

Will Find an Eager Welcome

I believe that there will be an eager welcome for them when they have mastered the courses which you are now preparing.

Secondly, we must have the automobile builders.

We are far from believing that our industry has yet reached its ultimate.

It is true that we have already attained to extraordinary figures. Our trucks move a billion and a quarter tons of freight a year. Allowing for ten million passenger cars in daily use, on the basis of 2½ persons riding in a car, we have twenty-five million automobile passengers daily.

But these figures, though wonderful, are not the ones of which we are most proud.

Still more do we felicitate ourselves that the genius of quantity production has permitted such a widespread distribution of our product.

Seventy-two per cent of all the automobiles go into population points of 50,000 or less, 52 per cent into points of 10,000 or less, and 30 per cent into points of 5,000 or less.

But we still have other things to accomplish.

We want to build automobiles and motor trucks that will adequately serve the public in transportation of persons and commodity, but inflict upon the highways a minimum of damage.

We constantly aim to lower the price of our units so we may have more users.

We seek to get lighter weight without sacrifice of stability, riding comfort or safety.

Perhaps the engineer to solve these problems is now a student in one of your colleges. He will be well rewarded, for the industry deals in big elements and can afford to pay.

We have one and a half billions of dollars invested in our plants. We produce more than two million units of transportation yearly. The wholesale value of cars, trucks, tires and accessories, in twelve months, amounts to three and one-half billions of dollars.

We expend for material one and a quarter billions yearly.

We pay three hundred and fifty million dollars of wages to one-quarter of a million factory employees, and open a means of livelihood to perhaps as many more associated with dealer plants, garages, repair shops and filling stations.

There is increasing chance for big earnings in the manufacture and distribution of automobiles.

Need Experts in Finance

The third requirement is that our colleges should develop intelligent specialists on highway finance.

The greatest deterring factor to more and better roads is the question of paying the bill.

There will be acclaim for the expert who can determine the proper basis of automobile taxation and the equitable allotment of highway construction costs.

Let me show you one or two of the problems.

Taxation is a most intricate science. It does not always work out as planned.

An excellent instance is to be found in revenue laws, which put the heavier tax on what were termed "luxuries."

The war made this a very popular policy.

Among other items Congress taxed long distance telephone calls, amusements, phonographs, moving pictures, automobiles and automobile repair parts. None of these taxes were aimed at the farmer, yet he it was who suffered most, for all these items are vital to make tolerable his life on the farm.

The telephone ends his isolation. The phonograph makes it possible to bring the master works of music to his home and children. The moving picture is one of his sources of education and diversion. The automobile is the basis of his contact with the outside world and his medium of transportation.

As owner of one-third of the automobiles in the United States, he suffered more through the parts taxes than any other one class.

Do not forget that when the farmer's automobile drops into a chuck-hole and breaks an axle, it is tough news for himself and his family. Even his neighbors regret it. But the United States Government is no "good Samaritan," for back of the barn lurks the tax collector waiting for his 5 per cent on the replacement axle.

We have always argued that any transportation tax is a hardship to our people and reflects itself in increased costs, yet we still are worrying along under automobile excise taxes.

We believe that these taxes should now be properly eliminated since they discriminate against an essential business. It is cheering to report that many members of Congress are coming to our viewpoint.

Perplexing problems are involved in the financing of highways programs.

We believe that two classes of our people should pay for building and maintaining our highways.

First: Those who own motor cars.

Second: Those who do not.

This is another way of saying that since everybody benefits everybody should pay, the major part of the cost naturally going to those who benefit most.

There are those who seem to believe that not enough taxation can ever be piled on the automobile.

We want to pay our share, but there is a point when over-taxation of any group becomes injustice.

As a fundamental we advocate that taxation shall come under one jurisdiction and should be uniform in type, if not in extent.

All funds levied from the automotive industry should be applied to the highways since those who pay such levies are also bearing the other taxes common to all citizenship.

Forty per cent of the cost of construction of the higher type of highways is permanent in character, as for example: drainage, location gradients. Therefore, it seems unreasonable to ask the people of the present decade to meet the entire cost of such construction.

Dividing Highway Costs

Therefore, as general principles we contend:

(1) That all highway expenditures should be divided just as railroad expenditures are, into two classes, capital outlay and current expenses.

(2) Since capital outlay is a permanent investment it should be paid for from the proceeds of long term bonds, and since highway construction is of benefit to all, the interest and amortization charges for such bonds should be paid for from general taxation.

(3) Current operating expenses naturally include all the costs of keeping these highways in first class condition. Everybody should pay some part of this maintenance cost through a general system of taxation, but the higher assessments for maintaining the highways should be borne by motor vehicle users and by agricultural and urban property owners whose valuations are enhanced by highway improvements. The proper ratios can be ascertained only by detailed study.

Just in this casual glance at the problems of finance that stand in the way of highway expansion, I think I demonstrate the need of men trained in revenue questions.

Our fourth great necessity calls for legal specialists.

The college that will turn out authorities on the subject of highways and automobile legislation, will confer an immense boon to the country.

At the present time the legislatures of forty-eight states are working on varied highway enactments.

Some of the provisions are wise. Some of them are unwise, despite sincere and painstaking efforts to get right results.

In most cases the failures result from the lack of adequate data.

There are lots of subjects to which the expert in highways legislation can direct his attention, even after the question of finance has been eliminated.

Legislators can render a great service in working out uniform regulations of motor transportation.

A centralized control, preferably by each state, will remove many local evils, and hasten progress.

State enactments should as quickly as possible be brought into accord with each other and with Federal enactments.

The proper regulation of the increasing volume of city traffic daily becomes more difficult.

Against Reckless Driving

Our industry cannot register too strongly its opposition to overspeeding and overloading.

It will welcome any program that will safeguard pedestrians, particularly children.

At the same time, the motor vehicle as a medium of great public service must be reasonably protected in its rights.

There is also the great issue of the regulation of motor vehicles as common carriers so that they and other mediums of transportation may not suffer unfair competition.

Assuming that this becomes inevitable it should be friendly to highway transport and not punitive.

It should protect the rights of road users and prevent abuses.

The expert on highway enactments will find plenty of call for his services.

There must also be trained transportation experts who can tell where traffic should properly be allocated. This is the fifth kind of a specialist you can develop.

These men can find clients in all lines of activity.

They will make investigations and advise great manufacturers and merchants where and when they should use railroads, steamships and motor trucks.

They can also be of help to the farmer in advising him as to the best means of reaching his market, having in mind all questions of perishable product, seasonable demand and cost of delivery.

Transportation is so large a factor in the cost of products that it

is not difficult to estimate the service that trained experts could render.

Somewhat related will be the traffic expert who will assist in city planning.

The real estate man is intimately concerned, perhaps more so than he knows, in the results of the new relationship between the highway and the motor car.

He forms the sixth essential kind of highly developed expert.

Those who think of the automobile merely as a "pleasure car" have perhaps never contemplated what a terrific real estate upheaval there would be if the car and truck should suddenly be withdrawn.

The Automobile and Real Estate Values

The evil consequences resulting would affect both city and rural population.

It will be found by analysis of living conditions in any great city that its central portion is more and more given over to commerce and manufacturing, and that the residence section constantly moves further into the suburbs.

The man of wealth and the man of only modest means find that the automobile gives ready touch with the heart of the city.

They ever have at hand a medium of individual transportation.

The man with $50,000 in his suburban home, or for that matter the man with only $5,000, will not jeopard that investment for the price of an automobile. So will the farmer decline to sacrifice the vehicle that connects him with his market.

Therefore, the automobile and the motor truck actually constitute a kind of real estate insurance.

There must be studies of how real estate values are increased by contiguity to improved highways. This is destined to be one of the big subjects of the future.

I have endeavored to suggest the kind of men we need for this work. Those who enter it will find forceful co-operation from the government, for through the splendid efforts of the War Department, the Bureau of Public Roads and the Highway Education Board, Washington has powerfully testified its interest.

This is important for the subject looms big with respect to our national future.

I never fear for our country.

The country is all right. The question is, are we big enough to develop it?

Our institutions have proved their stability in a century and a half of test.

In that interval only ourselves, England, Japan and Denmark have

escaped changes of government by revolt from within or conquest from without.

Our progress has been so great, so solid and so rapid that pessimism is confounded.

It is true, of course, that we have a national debt.

This amounts to twenty-four billion dollars, of which ten may be offset by the obligations of foreign governments to us.

But even assuming that these debts never should be liquidated, we have ten times as many assets as liabilities, for our net worth is estimated at not less than two hundred and twenty-five billions of dollars, some economists placing it as high as three hundred and fifty billions.

We are accused of being extravagant, and yet during the world war we absorbed twenty-two billion dollars' worth of loans, and withdrew from European possession six billion dollars' worth of American securities previously held there.

This means that our people saved in that period the unprecedented sum of twenty-eight billions of dollars.

With about 5 per cent of the world's population, we own or control 24 per cent of its agricultural production, half its gold, half its copper, half its petroleum, half its pig iron and half its steel products.

We make one-third of its shoes, and one-fourth of its linens.

This glance deals only with achievements and not with possibilities.

The great undeveloped west holds untold resources.

In the State of Arizona alone, 300,000 persons are living on 100,000 square miles.

Only irrigation and highways lack to create an incredible addition to our wealth, and to bring the necessities of life more readily and more economically within reach of our people, no matter how great our increase in population.

New Force Given Ancient Alliance

In forwarding highways development, the educator gives new force to an ancient alliance. Sentimentally and historically the highway has great claims upon him.

Since colonial days the destinies of highway and education have been linked.

The little red schoolhouse is our greatest and most distinctive contribution to world progress.

There have been other republics, other constitutions.

The Magna Charta served the cause of liberty five and a half centuries before the Declaration of Independence, but we were the

pioneer nation in making education democratic, in equalizing opportunity for the offspring of rich and poor.

When the settler had blazed his trail through the forest, he built the rude schoolhouse. Ignorance has had no more relentless foe than this combination. The humblest road leads finally to the schoolhouse. The two have been the Damon and Pythias of learning. Except for them there might have been no Lincoln.

Now the schoolhouse is outstripping its colleague.

Much road mileage remains primitive but the homes of education have undergone a transformation.

The little wooden shack has become the great stone palace of study.

Worthy structures have multiplied in all sections of the land. The smallest county boasts its fine High School. If there be but one worthy edifice in a community it is usually dedicated to education.

Gentlemen, for the good of us all the highway must not be permitted to lag. It must keep pace with the school, so that the union of the two, both freed of politics and both intelligently administered, may render its priceless service to the nation.

There could be no higher aspiration, no more dignified career, no better citizenship, no more practical patriotism, than to strive for this result.

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